



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Preserving Green Streetscape Character on Hillside Drive

Date:	February 19, 2014
To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Deputy City Manager, Cluster B
Wards:	Toronto-Danforth, Ward 29
Reference Number:	P:\2014\Cluster B\DCM\TE14001

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to address various access and right-of-way issues on Hillside Drive and to provide a mechanism to protect and enhance the green streetscape character of the street by restricting further access to Hillside Drive for properties fronting onto Broadview Avenue, between Pottery Road and Gamble Avenue who already have driveway access from Broadview Avenue.

Hillside Drive, South of Gamble is unusual in that the properties on the street have double frontage – existing access on Broadview Avenue with the rear of the lot backing on Hillside Drive. The requests to Transportation Services for rear-yard driveway access from properties that have existing frontage access on Broadview Avenue have prompted increasing concerns about the streetscape character of Hillside Drive.

As directed by City Council at its meeting on November 13, 14, 15, and 18, 2013, further access permits from Hillside Drive have not been granted. It is recommended that further permits not be granted until such time that public consultations have been conducted with area residents and the matter is reported back to Toronto and East York Community Council in 2014.

RECOMMENDATION

The Deputy City Manager, Cluster B recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager of Transportation Services to initiate the process to close to vehicular traffic a 0.3 metre wide strip of land shown as [Part 1 and Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-005 in Appendix C, and Part 1 and Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-006 in Appendix A] (the "New Reserve Strip").
2. City Council direct the appropriate staff to provide notice to the properties fronting onto Broadview Avenue, between Pottery Road and Gamble Avenue of the proposed by-law to close the New Reserve Strip to vehicular traffic and that staff conduct community consultations with the area residents.
3. City Council direct that no access permits to or from Hillside Drive be granted until such time that City Council considers the proposed by-law to close the New Reserve Strip.
4. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Cluster B to report back to Toronto East York Community Council in 2014 on this matter.

Financial Impact

There are no costs associated with the adoption of the above-noted recommendation.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council, at its meeting of November 13, 14, 15, and 18, 2013, in considering revised Member Motion MM41.30, adopted the motion to direct staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council on access and right-of-way issues and mechanisms to restrict further access to Hillside Drive for properties fronting onto Broadview Avenue, between Pottery Road and Gamble Avenue, who already have driveway access from Broadview Avenue. Furthermore, City Council also directed that no further access permits from Hillside Drive be granted until City Council considers the report from staff.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In November 2012, Transportation Services staff received an application from the homeowner of 1150 Broadview Avenue to permit an access driveway onto Hillside Drive from the rear of the property. This application was made because the homeowner had converted an integral garage (facing Broadview Avenue) to a living space. After an appropriate review, Transportation

Services staff granted rear-yard access to Hillside Drive. This was the first driveway to cut through the green streetscape in the vicinity of the cul-de-sacs.

At the time of writing of this report, the homeowner has completed construction of the driveway and is in the process of completing the associated rear-yard garage structure. Once the garage structure is completed and operational, the associated driveway from Broadview Avenue will have to be removed as the garage has been repurposed into living space. Subsequent to Transportation Services granting access onto Hillside Drive to the homeowner of 1150 Broadview Avenue, area residents expressed increasing concerns regarding this access. Their concerns were, primarily, that it impinged on streetscape character on Hillside Drive.

During this time, an additional application was received by Transportation Services for an adjacent property at 1148 Broadview Avenue, to permit an access driveway onto Hillside Drive. In view of continued concerns by area residents, and before any further access permits were granted for this area, City Council directed that staff report back on these concerns and any measures that may be appropriate to address the unusual conditions and the concerns that have arisen.

COMMENTS

Existing Conditions

Hillside Drive is a typical two-lane local residential roadway. However, the road allowance characteristics along Hillside Drive, south of Gamble Avenue are somewhat unique in that it is discontinuous. There is a break in the roadway between 56 and 58 Hillside Drive which results in two small back-to-back cul-de-sacs at significantly different elevations with a small green space in between. The green space consists of a grassed area with some vegetation, three trees newly planted in July 2013 and a set of steps (8 risers). A site map of the area and some photos are shown in Appendix A, Sketch No PS-2014-006 and Appendix B respectively.

The west side of Hillside Drive consists primarily of single family homes that back onto the Don Valley, with conventional parking access and driveways.

The east side of Hillside Drive, South of Gamble Avenue, there are 15 single family homes with deep lots that stretch between Broadview Avenue and Hillside Drive. All, with the exception of one, have access driveways onto Broadview Avenue and no rear yard access onto Hillside Drive. There is also a 24-hour on-street permit parking area, consisting of 24 perpendicular spaces, on the east side of Hillside Drive, south of Gamble Avenue. A centre median, consisting of rectangular concrete planter boxes, separates the northbound and southbound traffic lanes in this area.

Reviewing and Permitting New Driveways

The concerns expressed by area residents regarding requests to permit access onto Hillside Drive has led to questions regarding the City's process when reviewing applications for a curb cut/driveway access.

Article VII "Constructing Walkways and Driveways" of Municipal Code Chapter 743, Streets and Sidewalks, Use Of gives authority to the General Manager, Transportation Services to permit a person to construct driveways that cross the adjoining boulevard given certain conditions that are set out in Sections 743-42 and 743-43. When an application is received to construct a new driveway, staff in Transportation Services reviews the application to ensure that these conditions are met. Among others, these conditions include:

- 1) The requirement that the driveway is being constructed only for the purpose of providing vehicle access to an authorized vehicle parking area. When site plan approval is not required, the applicant is normally required to provide an approved building plan(s) indicating a vehicle parking area.
- 2) The location and design of the driveway are reviewed to minimize the driveway's impact on pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and to provide sufficient stopping and turning sight distances. From an access management perspective, applicants are often encouraged, where possible, to provide access from a lower order road to minimize the impact of motorists turning to and from a new driveway on roadways with higher volumes of traffic, transit, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- 3) The geometric design of the driveway is also reviewed to ensure appropriate grades and surface drainage.
- 4) The location of the driveway is also reviewed to ensure that it does not impact on any trees, nor extend into the boulevard area fronting an adjoining property.

The application is also circulated to other sections and divisions within the City for review to ensure that the proposed new access does not interfere with or contravene any City policies or operational requirements.

The permit process, however, is not designed to recognize and accommodate unusual situations. The request from 1148 Broadview Avenue for a permit to allow driveway access to Hillside Drive, when access is already provided to Broadview Avenue, presents an extraordinary situation. In this case, a portion of streetscaping, which is maintained by the City and has been in place for decades, will be removed. Potential impacts of granting access to Hillside include changing the character of the streetscape, loss of soft landscaping and increased paving. It could also potentially create a condition that would support future rear lot severances.

The recommendations in this report will allow for a pause in the issuance of permits and will give members of the public who wish to speak on this matter an opportunity to make a

deputation to Toronto and East York Community Council. In addition, public consultations will be held on future access to Hillside Drive with all potentially affected parties.

Options to Protect and Enhance Streetscape Character on Hillside Drive

Green streetscape between the northerly and southerly sections of Hillside Drive is currently public right-of-way under the jurisdiction of Transportation Services.

It is feasible to maintain space as public right-of-way, but restrict it to further vehicular access, by passing a by-law to close to vehicular traffic a 0.3 metre-wide strip of land along the edge of the right-of-way on Hillside Drive. This area is shown as Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-005 in Appendix C. This measure would prevent rear vehicular access to Hillside Drive from No. 1148, No. 1146, and No. 1144 Broadview Avenue. The existing legal access to the rear of No. 1150 Broadview Avenue would be maintained.

To further enhance the streetscape on the northerly section of Hillside Drive, consideration could be given to restricting vehicular access from the rear of the properties south of Gamble Avenue in a similar way. This area is shown as Part 1 on Sketch No. PS-2014-005 in Appendix C. In this area, there is an on-street parking zone, exclusively for the use of residents with overnight parking permits, where vehicles park perpendicular to the street. This area accommodates up to 24 vehicles. Current records show that this parking area is, and has over the years, been notably underutilized (currently 9 of 24 spaces have associated permits). There is an opportunity to improve all or part of the streetscape in this area. A functional design plan would be required, with community consultation.

To maintain the streetscape in the boulevard on the east side of the southerly section of Hillside Drive, it is feasible to close to vehicular traffic a 0.3 metre wide strip of land on the edge of the right-of-way, shown as Part 1 and Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-006 in Appendix A. This measure would effectively restrict the ability of a property to apply for a new vehicular driveway. It would not, however, restrict access to those properties which already have legal access.

To restrict any further access onto any part of Hillside Drive, it is feasible to close to vehicular traffic, a 0.3 metre wide strip of land shown as Part 1 and Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-005 in Appendix C, and Part 1 and Part 2 on Sketch No. PS-2014-006 in Appendix A. The process entails the preparation of a Reference Plan of Survey to clearly identify the area to be closed which is required for the highway closing by-law. The closing process requires approval from City Council after members of the public have been given an opportunity to make a deputation on the matter at Toronto and East York Community Council.

Additionally, Community Council could decide to review whether the parking area or a portion thereof on Hillside Drive can be converted to green space, and then recommend to City Council that City staff review the feasibility of converting all or part of the existing 24 space permit parking on the east side of Hillsdale Avenue, south of Gamble Avenue, to green streetscape.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Study Area Map and Survey Plan
Appendix B – Area Photos
Appendix C – Survey Plan 2